CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 1 March 1990, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Emeka Ayo Azikiwe (Nigeria)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 539th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me, at the beginning, to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of the Conference, to His Excellency the Minister of External Affairs of Nigeria, Dr. Rilwanu Lukman, who is attending the commencement of the Nigerian presidency of the Conference to stress the importance that our country attaches to the work of this multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, to which Nigeria has belonged since its inception in 1962. Dr. Lukman is a graduate of Imperial College in the University of London and the University of Leoben, Austria, where he studied mining engineering and mining mineral resources. Dr. Lukman is a Fellow and past President of the Nigerian Mining and Geosciences Society, a Fellow of Imperial College, a Fellow of the Institute of Mining and Metallurgy and also a Knight of the British Empire. He has long been associated with the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Before assuming his present portfolio Dr. Lukman was Minister of Mines, Power and Steel and also of Petroleum Resources, in which capacity he was President of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) from June 1986 to December 1989. His Excellency the Minister of External Affairs will address the Conference today, and I should like to express my gratitude to him for having decided to attend this opening and to convey to the Conference the views of the Nigerian Government on the important subjects facing the Conference at this annual session.

Allow me to thank Ambassador Hendrik Wagenmakers of the Netherlands for the very effective and able manner in which he discharged his responsibilities during the month of February. He showed once more his diplomatic skill and experience in the field of disarmament and advanced substantially the organization of our work for the annual session. In that connection, I pledge to all of you the commitment of the Nigerian delegation to actively continue to deal with all those matters which are still subject to consultation. I intend to engage in renewed efforts with the objective of re-establishing the Ad hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space at the earliest possible date, and to conduct consultations on agenda items 2 and 3 in the next few days. I have taken note of the statement of my predecessor concerning the consultations being conducted by Ambassador Donowaki of Japan on agenda item 1, and I welcome his untiring efforts in this respect, particularly keeping in mind the outstanding manner in which he represented Japan in my country, Nigeria, before joining us here in the Conference on Disarmament. I should like, for my part, to encourage him to continue with his valuable contribution to our work. As you know, my country attaches great importance to the question of a nuclear test ban, and I shall spare no effort to promote agreement on that subject, including of course making myself available to assist Ambassador Donowaki and other colleagues dealing with this subject whenever necessary. Among the questions still pending, we should also discuss the expansion of the membership of the Conference and its improved and effective functioning. I also assure you that I shall be at the disposal of all members in the consideration of these issues and other matters before the Conference. By the same token, I am sure that I will greatly benefit from your advice and experience in our common tasks.

(The President)

In accordance with its programme of work, the Conference continues today its consideration of agenda item 1, "Nuclear test ban", and agenda item 2, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". In accordance with rule 30 of its rules of procedure, however, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference. I should like now to give the floor to His Excellency the Minister of External Affairs of Nigeria, Dr. Rilwanu Lukman.

Mr. LUKMAN (Nigeria): Mr. President, Mr. Permanent Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Your Excellencies, I am honoured to address you today at a time when the prospects of peace and security have taken a positive turn in international relations. I am particularly pleased to see our distinguished Permanent Representative taking up the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the month of March. This is a fitting tribute to Nigeria's role in the field of disarmament. Let me also congratulate Mr. Hendrik Wagenmakers, Ambassador of the Netherlands, for the effective manner in which he successfully conducted the work of the Conference in the month of February.

As a country traditionally dedicated to the cause of international peace and security, Nigeria's position on disarmament issues has always been clear and unambiguous. We have a long tradition of participating in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We shall continue to work actively in this and other forums to initiate and support proposals for the promotion and strengthening of international peace and security.

At the United Nations, the Nigerian delegation has been actively participating over the years in the negotiations to review and strengthen the provisions of the United Nations Charter, in particular its peace and security provisions. Similarly, here in the Conference on Disarmament, we remain committed to the work of the Conference and continue to give careful attention and support to all proposals enhancing peace and security.

There have been dramatic developments in the past three years, resulting from the new spirit of co-operation between the two super-Powers. This evolution has facilitated the reduction in global tension, the resolution of some regional conflicts and the creation of a conducive climate for negotiations leading to the resolution of others which hitherto appeared intractable. While Nigeria is pleased with this increasing manifestation of co-operation and the attendant relaxation in tension among nation States, we must guard against slipping back into the climate of mistrust and insecurity that characterized the last decade.

With renewed hopes resulting from the recent developments in international politics, my delegation would like to call on all States to reaffirm their faith and restore confidence in the various multilateral institutions such as this Conference for the maintenance of international peace and security. The significant lesson to be derived from the recent changes is that rapid progress in inter-State relations takes place in a climate of trust, confidence, good will and transparency. We therefore call on all the nuclear-weapon States, in particular the super-Powers, to reconsider the doctrine of nuclear deterrence with a view to attaining security at lower levels of armament.

(Mr. Lukman, Nigeria)

In response to serious concerns expressed by the international community, the Soviet Union and the United States of America in December 1987 signed the first nuclear disarmament agreement in history - the INF Treaty. Its value no doubt lies in the promise of providing the basis for a far-reaching agreement on the reduction of strategic nuclear weapons. Last 22 January, the Soviet Union and the United States moved a step further in signing a verification measure for the first-ever reciprocal trial inspection of their nuclear warheads, and the renewal of the strategic arms reduction talks. Also gratifying are the efforts being made to reduce conventional forces in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Notwithstanding these commendable efforts, as well as other relevant unilateral and bilateral arms reductions already undertaken or in progress, there is no substitute for a multilateral negotiating body like the Conference on Disarmament. Global issues require active and continuous participation by all States. The potential effects of these efforts will depend largely on the political willingness of the nuclear-weapon States to negotiate in good faith, abide by already established security standards and retain an unswerving commitment to the survival of mankind.

There is ample evidence that sophisticated technologies are being employed for the development of a new generation of nuclear and conventional weapons. We are now witnessing the qualitative refinement of nuclear weapons to compensate for the quantitative reductions in many instances. A nuclear test ban continues to be the most important item on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. The Secretary-General of the United Nations rightly observed in his message to the current session that "the United Nations has repeatedly assigned the highest priority to the issue of cessation of all nuclear test explosions. The encouraging signs witnessed in bilateral negotiations should be further advanced. However, I remain convinced that a complete ban on such tests can pave the way to nuclear disarmament and rid the world of the nuclear menace".

If a problem can be solved by the amount of attention it has received, then the complete prohibition of all nuclear testing ought to have been achieved long ago. The partial test-ban Treaty of 1963 underlined the importance of bringing nuclear testing to an end. Both the PTBT and the NPT, to which Nigeria is a party, imposed concrete obligations on depositary Governments, to "seek to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time and to continue negotiations to this end".

Nigeria is convinced that if the objectives of nuclear disarmament are to be attained, the utmost priority must be accorded to a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty. This important disarmament measure is a challenge to all States in achieving the eventual elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. Logically, adherence to the treaty has to be universal, as a CTBT will reinforce mutual trust and confidence-building measures not only between the super-Powers and their allies, but also in all regions. The commitment of nuclear-weapon States in negotiating a comprehensive test-ban treaty is no doubt essential. It bears repetition that the role of the Conference on Disarmament in negotiating such a treaty should never be in doubt. No obstacle should be put in its way in negotiating an instrument of such vital importance towards the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

(Mr. Lukman, Nigeria)

We note with satisfaction that the process of convening an amendment conference to convert the 1963 partial test-ban Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban treaty has already received the support of many States parties. Nigeria supports this bold initiative already endorsed at Belgrade last August 1989 at the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In a few months from now, in August to be precise, the Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will commence here in Geneva. The Treaty, which was negotiated in the ENDC in the mid-1960s, occupies pride of place as the disarmament agreement with the widest adherence. It has contributed immensely to preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons and to international efforts aimed at averting the danger of nuclear war. The Treaty remains today a disarmament instrument of immense value. It is with a sense of satisfaction, therefore, that I recall that Nigeria not only participated effectively in the negotiation of the Treaty, but, more importantly, was the first among the countries that negotiated the Treaty to ratify it. This clearly demonstrates the abiding faith which Nigeria has in the Treaty in particular and the non-proliferation régime in general.

In an effort to further strengthen the non-proliferation régime and attract greater adherence to the NPT, the Government of Nigeria on 2 November 1989 formally submitted to the depositary Governments of the Treaty a proposed agreement on the prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT for consideration during the forthcoming review conference next August. The text of the proposal has already been circulated in this Conference as an official document. I am also informed that the depositary Governments have similarly circulated it among States parties. The proposal, which is complementary in nature to the NPT, does not in any way represent an amendment to the Treaty. Nigeria believes that the NPT is a very valuable document which does not require any amendment. What is required is the adoption of such necessary additional measures outside the Treaty, but closely related to it, as would strengthen the confidence of the parties, particularly the non-nuclear-weapon States. Such measures would also strengthen the non-proliferation régime.

Our proposal seeks to allay the anxiety of most non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT whose confidence in the Treaty appears to be eroding, owing to their concern that forgoing the nuclear option through their membership of the NPT may have placed them at a permanent military disadvantage and made them vulnerable to nuclear intimidation. For such States parties, the adoption of the proposed agreement would restore their confidence in the Treaty, by making it more relevant to their security concerns in this nuclear era. The proposal also seeks to provide a further incentive to non-parties which have hitherto remained outside the Treaty to consider adhering to the NPT.

Nigeria hopes that all parties to the NPT represented in this unique multilateral disarmament negotiating body will lend their valuable support to this initiative when it comes up for consideration both at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, and at the review conference itself.

(Mr. Lukman, Nigeria)

I would like to make it clear that Nigeria's proposed agreement is without prejudice to the work of the Conference on Disarmament on negative security assurances. Nigeria has submitted proposals to this Conference on the item, and will continue to contribute towards the efforts of the Conference until such time as an appropriate formula is found for the provision of assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States, irrespective of whether or not such States have relinquished the nuclear option through a legally binding international instrument.

Let me now address myself to the work you have done so far in negotiating a convention on the complete elimination of chemical weapons. We are pleased to note the tremendous effort made towards the attainment of this objective. Deep inroads have been made in areas that had been contentious and intractable. The issue of verification, and especially the politically charged question of challenge inspection, have seen substantial progress. Political, legal and institutional matters are also being addressed. This is the edifice on which the future convention will rest and must therefore be given the same consideration and attention as other issues. Of great importance to my Government is the question of universality. Universal adherence to the convention is essential for the complete eradication of chemical weapons. In this regard, the provision of incentives such as assistance and co-operation in economic and technological development is important.

Also of particular importance for the convention is the need to assure States that giving up the right to produce or acquire weapons would not leave a State party at the mercy of non-parties. For this reason nothing could be more reassuring to the States parties, especially the weaker ones, than provision in the future convention for collective and mandatory action in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter against any chemical weapon attack, be it from a State party or a non-party to the convention. This is the most important single inducement that can help to ensure the adherence of the weaker States to the future convention. The international community is anxiously awaiting the conclusion of the convention. There is therefore a need to keep up the momentum that the negotiations have acquired during the past year, so that the convention can be concluded at the earliest date. In this connection, I would like to state that Nigeria has no chemial weapons and does not intend to acquire them in the future.

We have also been following with keen interest the negotiations on a convention to prohibit the development, production, stockpiling and use of radiological weapons. We welcome the initiative and indeed the foresight to ban such dangerous weapons even before production. Nigeria has broadened the scope of the convention by proposing the prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes for hostile purposes. But I must note with some sense of regret that despite the time that has been devoted to this item, the Conference is still a long way from concluding a convention. A faster pace of work is needed. This Conference owes it to the international community to prevent the future development of radiological weapons and such methods of warfare.

(Mr. Lukman, Nigeria)

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that ridding our planet of the vast arsenals of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is the greatest challenge of our time. This must be reflected in the work of the Conference. Apart from the tremendous impact that this will have on the security of States, the resources freed as a result of disarmament measures will enable the international community to fully address those other areas that also pose serious threats to international peace and security. The realization that a nuclear war cannot be won, the appreciation that more armament does not necessarily mean greater security and the emerging willingness to seek security at lower levels of armaments are a reflection of the changing times. We must take advantage of the window of opportunity brought about by this new spirit of co-operation.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to thank His Excellency the Minister of External Affairs of Nigeria for his important statement and for the kind words he addressed to me. I have no other speaker on my list today. Does any other member wish to take the floor?

The plenary meeting stands adjourned. */

The plenary meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.

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*/ It was understood that the next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament would be held on Tuesday, 6 March, at 10 a.m.